

UNDER 10 FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE SERVICE

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To present proposals to remodel the Family Support Service for Children under 10, to commence with a full stakeholder consultation in early 2004 and the production of a detailed development plan. This is within the context of the wider review of services in relation to looked after children.
- 1.2. This follows reports to the Children and Families Panel on 26 June 2003 and 11 December 2003, setting out a new direction for the service consisting of three distinct strands. The first strand provides intensive time limited work with families whose children are most at risk of entering the looked after children system and of those already in the system. The second provides early intervention and support for families experiencing earlier stress, to reduce the need for later more complex interventions. The third strand develops a service in each quadrant for the co-ordination of parental contact for looked after children.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The report takes into account the Green Paper "Every Child Matters" published in September and its implications for the development of the service.
- 2.2. Current service activity is considered alongside the anticipated workload of the new service. Elements of the existing service that can be undertaken elsewhere are identified, freeing up resources for children and families at more significant risk.
- 2.3. A new quadrant based staffing structure is outlined, based on two teams, one for focused intervention work and one for prevention. A third strand is added to address the need to organise parental contact for looked after children more effectively and efficiently within the context of family support.

- 2.4. The report outlines an accommodation strategy that proposes two Family Support bases in each quadrant. In those quadrants (South and East) where there are currently three buildings, the service will continue to be provided, using either the existing third building or from additional satellite bases accessible to needy local communities.
- 2.5. The detail of the financial implications, linked to an assessment of the impact of the new service, proposes short-term additional expenditure with a view to substantial longer-term savings in budgets related to Looked After Children.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1. The proposed service structure and capital strategy will enable CSF to deliver an effectively focused family support service, targeted both on children and families at greatest risk and on prevention. The short term goal is to reduce the number of looked after children in this age group with the longer term aim of freeing up resources to invest in more preventative work in the future.
- 3.2. It responds to the vision of future Children's Services outlined in the Green Paper, "Every Child Matters", strengthening support to families through the multi agency approach outlined in the previous Panel Report and taking the service closer to local communities. The improvement in facilities for staff, including ICT, mobility and a better career structure, will assist retention. The Quadrant rather than District based structure will embed the service securely within Local Services and improve cohesion.
- 3.3. Positioning more of the service at the complex end of the family support continuum and utilising the increased mainstream early years services to support all families and those with early stresses promotes inclusion, provides a full range of family support and effectively targets resources at those most in need.
- 3.4. Cabinet is invited to consider approving the proposals for the remodelled Family Support Service for children under 10.

4. Background

- 4.1. This proposal has been developed in the light of the Government Green Paper, entitled “Every Child Matters”. This recommends a range of support to families, as a part of universal services such as children’s centres, schools and health services to those providing specialist and targeted support to families in crisis.
- 4.2. The Green Paper focuses on a number of areas to achieve early intervention and effective protection that include:
 - Improving information sharing
 - Establishing a common assessment framework
 - Identifying lead professionals through multi disciplinary teams
 - Integrating professionals
 - Co-locating services
 - Effective child protection procedures.
- 4.4. The remodelled Family Support service will address and take account of these issues.
- 4.5. The diagram in Figure 1 is based on the “Hardiker framework”, which was introduced as a model for categorising levels of need. The Hardiker framework consists of four levels of provision, in addition to the universal “base level”. *Level One* consists of services offered to vulnerable groups and communities. *Level Two* includes services for families suffering early stresses and temporary crises. *Level Three* provides support to those experiencing severe stresses and at risk of family breakdown, whilst *Level Four* services are provided once children have been removed from home. Figure 1 shows the service in Hertfordshire currently provided at each level.
- 4.6. Since services at the base level and Level One are increasingly being provided within universal services, as recommended in the Green Paper, the Family Support Service should therefore be re-organised in order to target families in need at Levels 2-4, as defined above.

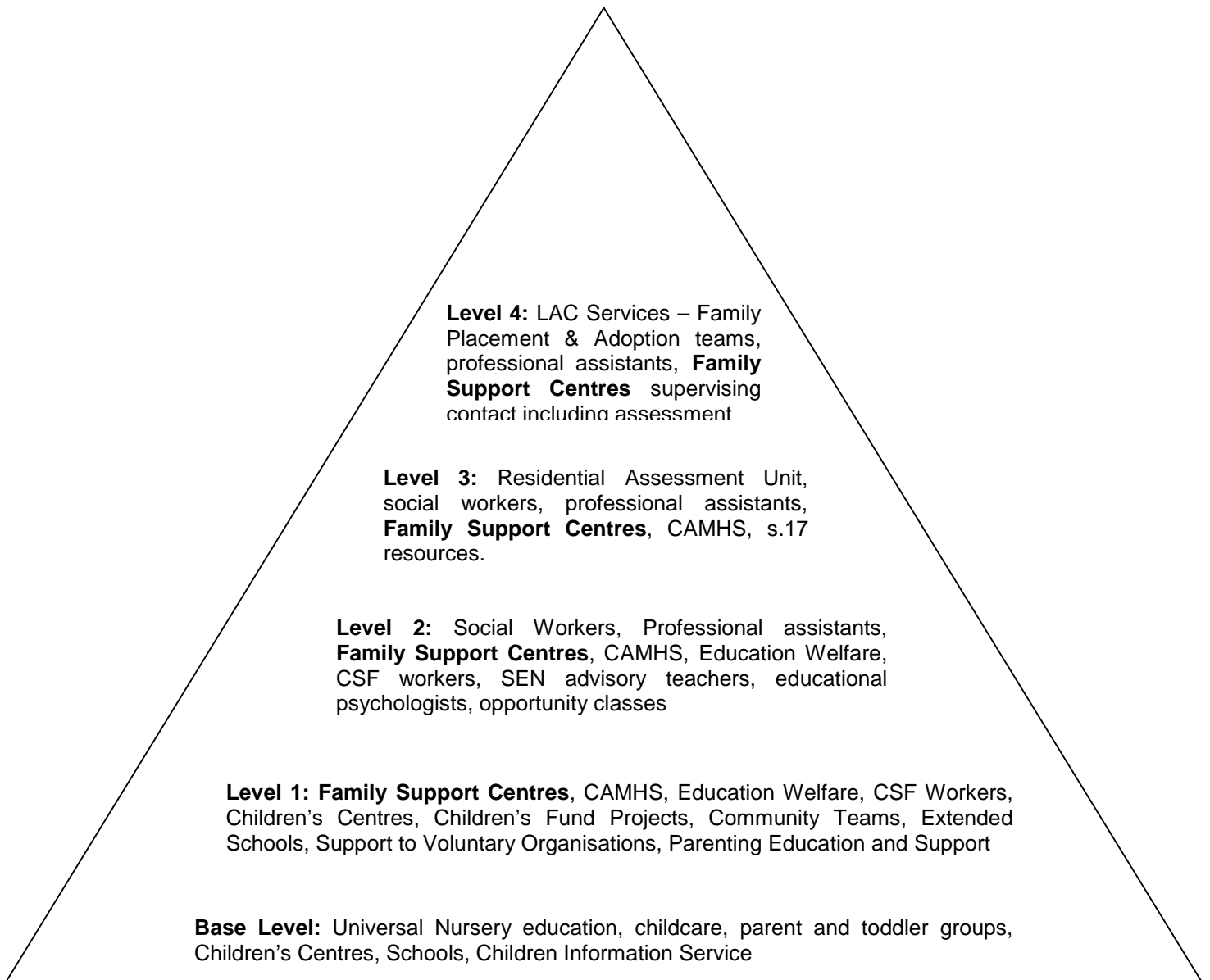


Figure 1: The range of CSF Support at each level of need

4.7. A business case for use of Private Finance Initiative credits has been reported separately to members and the two proposals have been developed in tandem. The proposal for remodelling the service is not exclusively dependent on the success of the PFI business case but would be enhanced by the major redevelopment and refurbishment of Family Centres envisaged. The options if the PFI business case does not go forward are outlined in paragraphs 7.8 and 8.2.

5. Service Activity

- 5.1. The Children in Need Census conducted in February 2003 (See Appendix 1) identified that the Family Support Centre Service was working with 974 children during the census week. If the report assumes 2.5 children per family the service was working with 390 families.
- 5.2. The total staffing of the current service across the county is 114 fte. This includes administrative staff and managers. On average the current service works with each family for 9 months, giving an annual total of families worked with of 487. This total includes supervised contact.
- 5.3. In the new service the Focus Intervention Team (FIT) will work more intensively with families. It is envisaged that the staffing resources available to this team will allow for the level of intensive support required for families under severe stress and at risk of breakdown. With total staffing in FIT as 54fte the service would be working with 81 families. This takes account of the fact that many of these families require the involvement of more than one worker at a given time. As well as being more intensive, the work with families would be time limited to 12-16 weeks. This means that over the course of a year the service would work with 243 families.
- 5.4. The Preventative Team will work with families at a similar rate to the existing service. With 42fte staff this equates to 142 families at any one time and 177 families over a year.
- 5.5. The capacity over the course of a year for the new service would be approximately 420 families in total across the two teams.
- 5.6. The new model would also contain a "Contact Service" of 14 staff countywide that would have the capacity to provide 80 supervised contact sessions per week, countywide. This will provide suitable, locally accessible family-friendly accommodation for children who are looked after to maintain regular contact with their families, and will provide a structure for this service to be better co-ordinated and more efficient.
- 5.7. The new service would work with universal services to transfer "Level One" interventions such as "High Scope" sessions so that they are integrated into mainstream provision. "High Scope" refers to a specific form of early education for children who have particular needs. These children would be integrated into main stream early education with additional support as appropriate. This change will be facilitated by a planned transition over a period of time in consultation with the Children's Information Service, Behaviour Support Teams, Pre School SEN Advisory Teachers and Area SENCOs working with Family Support staff.

- 5.8. Any Level One work such as drop in sessions or support groups that could be led in the community will be considered for transfer to universal services such as Children's Centres, Extended Schools and the Voluntary sector in the longer term.
- 5.9. The approach outlined in paragraph's 5.6 to 5.8 will free up at least 7% of resource from the existing service.
- 5.10. One of the key drivers for the change in service is the need to reduce the number of LAC in this age group. There has been a trend for children to become looked after at an early age and to remain looked after for longer periods, leading to an overall increase in the total number. Numbers can be reduced both by more intensive work targeting children on the point of entering the system, and also by more focused work towards rehabilitation or move into permanent placements, for those children who do become looked after.
- 5.11. Last year 200 children under 10 entered the LAC system, an estimated 80 families. In order to maximise the impact on numbers of looked after children, the focused intervention team would need to work with these families as well as other families whose children are in the system (currently 380 children or 152 families).
- 5.12. It has been calculated that the capacity of the Focused Intervention Team will be sufficient to respond to this demand, with the proposed allocation of resources between the elements of the service. Should the balance need adjustment, job descriptions will be sufficiently flexible to allow staff to move between the teams to meet demand. This will have the added advantage of opportunities for staff to gain experience in both parts of the service.

6. Service and staffing structure

- 6.1. It is proposed that the Family Support Service would consist of two discrete teams dedicated respectively to early preventative intervention and focused targeted intervention for families in crisis. It is further proposed that there would be a small Contact Co-ordination Team within each quadrant. The three teams would be accountable to the Group Manager for Referral and Assessment in each quadrant.
- 6.2. If resources were split equally between the four quadrants the model for new staffing structure in each quadrant would be as follows:

- **Family Support Preventative Team**
Family Support Manager (Preventative)
2 Senior Family Support Workers
7 Family Support Workers
0.5 Admin Support
- **Family Support Focused Intervention Team**
Family Support Manager (Focused Intervention)
3 Senior Family Support Workers
8.5 Family Support Workers
0.5 Care Assistant
0.5 Admin Support
- **Contact Service**
1 Contact Co-ordinator
2 Contact Supervisors
1 Admin support

6.3. The Focused Intervention Team will operate in the evening and at weekends as well as during office hours. The salary structure will need to reflect this. An additional budget for supply staff will provide an additional flexible resource. Most work will be conducted in families' own homes and staff will require support for transport including mileage and leased cars.

6.4. Additionally, we will ensure that a new career structure is available to family support workers, giving experienced staff the opportunity to progress in their career, thereby increasing staff retention. The above staffing structure therefore includes sufficient family support worker posts at grade H5 and grade H6 to ensure a competency-based progression scheme for experienced workers.

7. Buildings Strategy

7.1. The strategy for accommodation to support a remodelled family support service is based on the following principles:

- i. Re-focusing of the service away from centre-based activities and towards support provided in families' own homes and communities, in line with the recommendations in the Green Paper.
- ii. Providing services which are accessible to vulnerable local communities.
- iii. Developing a modernised service with adequate office facilities and good access to networked ICT in order to participate in improved information sharing, again to comply with the requirements envisaged in the Green Paper.
- iv. Providing adequate, safe, family-friendly Contact Suites to accommodate a discrete, efficient and co-ordinated Contact Service in each quadrant.

- 7.2. The intention is that existing centres would be refurbished or replaced using Private Finance Initiative credits, to achieve the above objectives.
- 7.3. Within each quadrant, there would be two Family Support Centres. One of these would act as the principal management and administrative resource base for both teams. The other would also include some administrative and office space but would also include the Contact Suite for use by the contact team. The Contact Suite would be self-contained in order to minimise disruption to other activities. Both centres would also contain space for parenting and other therapeutic groups for parents and children.
- 7.4. In quadrants where there are currently three centres (East and South), family support activities will continue to operate in those areas. These services will either operate out of an existing building (this is an option proposed for the South quadrant) or from satellite premises in the locality (see 7.7).
- 7.5. In addition to the centres described below, in order to ensure local accessibility, existing strong links would be developed with local communities, local schools and health services. Family support activities can then be delivered in “satellite” premises that are closer to families’ homes, such as schools, children’s centres, health centres, and community centres. Linking to existing and newly developed universal services will be a key feature of this development, as recommended in the Green Paper “Every Child Matters”.
- 7.6. The two centres in each quadrant would be located as follows:

North Quadrant:

Existing Family Support Centres	Proposal
Noel, Letchworth	Noel Family Support Centre, Letchworth
Stevenage	This Centre belongs to NCH. It is proposed that a new Centre is created in Stevenage

South Quadrant:

Existing Family Support Centres	Proposal
Beechwood, Watford	Beechwood, Watford
Borehamwood	There are plans to develop a new centre with health on the Furzehill School site. Either the existing Centre or the new site would be a centre
Otley Way, South Oxhey	To be a satellite centre or replaced by several smaller satellites as indicated in 2.3 and 7.5.

East Quadrant:

Existing Family Support Centres	Proposal
Rainbow , Welwyn Garden City	Rainbow , Welwyn Garden City
Crossbrook, Cheshunt	Crossbrook, Cheshunt
Ware	Support to families in need in Ware and surrounding areas will continue to be provided from new satellite facilities, which will also be identified in other areas of the quadrant such as Bishops Stortford.

West Quadrant

Existing Family Support Centres	Proposal
Burymill, Hemel Hempstead	Burymill, Hemel Hempstead
Fleetville, St Albans	Fleetville, St Albans

- 7.7. There are likely to be sensitivities regarding the closure of the centres at Ware and possibly of one of the centres in the South Quadrant. The proposals, however, will not result in a reduction of service since the development of local satellite provisions is intended to ensure that all local communities would receive an appropriate service. No centre would be closed until such a service could be provided.
- 7.8. In the event that Private Finance Initiative credits were not approved, the remodelling of the service would be achieved either:
- a) Within the existing buildings or
 - b) Considering the Family Support Service for under 10s buildings strategy alongside the Area Primary Reviews and the development of Children's Centres.

8. NCH Service in Stevenage.

- 8.1. In order to harmonise the service across the County and achieve as consistent an approach as possible, it is envisaged that the service in Stevenage will cease to be commissioned from the NCH and will instead be provided "in-house".
- 8.2. NCH owns the building from which services in Stevenage are delivered. If the PFI business case is not successful, consideration would need to be given to continuing to contract part of the service for north quadrant through NCH or identifying alternative accommodation through the review work associated with "Building Schools for the Future" and the review of primary places.

9. Impact on Numbers of Looked After Children (See Appendix 2)

- 9.1. In March 2003 there were 380 looked after children under the age of 10. At current rates of increase, it is predicted that there would be 390 looked after children in this age group by April 2004, when the above plan would begin to be implemented and 447 looked after children by March 2008. This represents an increase of 57 children in 4 years in this age group.
- 9.2. The intended impact of the Focused Intervention Team will be to achieve a 20% reduction in numbers of looked after children in the first 4 years. This is similar to results achieved in other authorities such as Cambridgeshire and Milton Keynes that have implemented similar changes. Cambridgeshire reduced LAC from 492 to 360 over a 4 year period, an annual percentage reduction of 6.75 %. Milton Keynes from 350 to 230 over 3 years, an annual percentage reduction of 11.5%.
- 9.3. With this 20% reduction, by March 2008 there would be 318 looked after children under 10. Compared with the above projection of 447, this is a difference of 129 looked after children. The potential financial savings realised by this impact are detailed in paragraph 10.12.

Impact on numbers of looked after children in the first four years of the project:

Year	Numbers of LAC predicted	Numbers of LAC taking into account impact of new service.
2002/03	Actual figure: 380	380
2003/04	390	390
2004/05	410	383
2005/06	422	367
2006/07	434	345
2007/08	447	318

10. Financial Implications (See Appendix 3)

- 10.1 The net additional cost to the budget covering these services is £241,274 in Year1, reducing to £168,127 in Year 2. A full explanation of costs and savings can be found in Appendix 3. In brief, these cover staffing costs, emergency cover, relocation costs, premises costs, supplies and services, transport and one-off set-up costs.
- 10.2 It is proposed that PFI credits will be used to refurbish the existing centres in order to make them more appropriate for the new service.

Ware Family Centre will also be sold and a request made to Cabinet to use the sale proceeds to set up satellite provision.

If PFI credits and/or the proceeds of the sale of Ware Family Centre are not re-used for the service the options are:

- a) to use existing centres
- b) to include consideration of Family Support Service accommodation needs, within Area Primary Reviews and the development of Children's Centres.

10.3 The impact on numbers of looked after children as detailed in paragraph 9.2 and Appendix 2 would result in a saving of over £2m over the 4-year period. This is based on the projected increase in costs of residential and fostering placements and the assumption of a 20% reduction in numbers of looked after children as opposed to a projected 14% increase.

10.4 Family Support Centre resources, historically, have been distributed differentially across the quadrants. One Family Support Centre is currently located in each District. In the remodelled service resources will be distributed according to an agreed formula which takes account of child populations, numbers of children looked after and those on the child protection register. It is not envisaged that this would alter the total number of staff as detailed in paragraph 6.2, or the management structure, and therefore would not involve costs in addition to those already detailed in paragraph 10.1.

11. Next Steps.

Subject to approval of the proposals, a detailed development plan will be drawn up, to commence with a full stakeholder consultation in early 2004.

12. Background information referred to by the author:

Hardiker, P., Exton, K. and Barker, M. (1995) The Prevention of Child Abuse: A Framework for Analysing Services.

Statham, J. (2000) Outcomes and Effectiveness of Family Support Services. A Research Review. Institute of Education.

Green Paper: Every Child Matters. TSO 2003

*Children and Families Panel June 26th 2003:
Development Plan for the Under 10 Family Support Centre Service:
Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families.*

*Children and Families Panel December 11th 2003:
Development Plan for the Under 10 Family Support Centre Service:
Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

